wood was getting low. Friday (wan suk:day of happiness) was the best day of all to leave the fire, but for her, Friday happened to fall on the fourteenth day after delivery. It was better to come off on another day than to risk taking such an important step on an even-numbered day. Even numbers were always associated with the even corners of a coffin.

Usually the fire period went off safely, but not this time! One day, the heat "seemed to come up suddenly" and choke Dūan. She rose gasping and ran to the window for air. Horrified at the terrible danger of cool air, Lek hastened to get her back to the board. Then by accident Dūan dripped too much water on the fire and put it out! Later, Dūan was almost unconscious, felt unhappy (klum) and as if "the fire were burning inside her." Lek called both Sai and the mō. As the mō entered, Lek handed him the expected offering of incense, flowers, candle, and a baht and a half for his khwan khāo. He prayed to his teacher, then made holy water and a decoction both of which he gave Dūan to drink, saying, "The bad blood and the fish-water did not flow out well, a common trouble after childbirth. Since your body is not cold and the fire has not been out a half-day, you could start the fire up again. But as it is never good to put out the fire like this, I am taking you off it. Take a pot of salt, heat it well and wrap it in a cloth. Put that on your abdomen. Drink no cold water, or you will die."

Dūan was sad that she had to leave the fire early and on an even-numbered day, but one always wanted to obey a mō. All had gone so well when Chāi was born! That time she had taken the usual steps, choosing a Friday to come off the fire. Now she could not choose. Her formal leave of the fire was as before: The mō prepared earth holy water (nammon thoranisān), some of which she drank, and some he sprinkled on the fire. She then knelt down facing the fire and touched her forehead to the floor 3 times, asking the Mother of the Fire to bless her and her child, and to keep them well. She went outside to bathe, first with warm water to cleanse her body, then with holy water, and put on a clean skirt. Returning to the house she seated herself quietly, for she was not supposed to do anything for a time. Others in the family broke up the fireplace. The baby was taken off the winnowing tray. Warm water mixed with the holy water was dropped in his mouth. After being bathed in the holy water, he was laid in a little cradle made of a long cotton scarf, spread apart with sticks, and swung between 2 houseposts.

Now that the fire-period was over, they stopped all boiling of the water for the baby and Dūan. Rain water was substituted, but whenever the baby seemed sickly, boiled water was used. When their rain-water ran out, they got some at the temple. Both Dūan and the baby continued taking medicine for many weeks.

births, until with the seventh child it might be dispensed with altogether without harm. In Bang Chan women who observed (2)juu (1)faj rested for an odd number of days, from 5 to 15 in this series. Seven or 9 days was most common. An odd number of days was considered good; an even number, bad. A wood fire was customary, although in 2 instances a charcoal brazier was used. One woman lay near a charcoal brazier and used a hot ashes chamber[1] also. With one exception (a non-Thai), even those who did not lie by the fire, but who used the hot ashes chamber, rested an odd number of days.

The traditional ideas on which the custom of lying by the fire was based were described in the Bangkok Calendar (Bradley, 1865):

> "The Siamese theory in regard to the part, which external and internal fire plays in the functions of life and health, is made to work powerfully in these circumstances. It teaches that there is, at such times, a diminution of heat in the body, and consequent liability to stagnation of the blood, which if not guarded against by fire, will leave the uterus flabby and enlarged, bad humors in the circulation, a consequent weak state of the stomach, resulting in the secretion of too little milk, and that of a bad quality for the child, all of which will be likely to be followed by a host of other fearful maladies to both mother and child."

The author, however, attributed deficiency in milk production to the practice of lying by the fire:

> "How it is very remarkable that these last sequences, which are guarded against at so much expense of ease and comfort by the custom, are postively and directly brought about by following it. The mothers have but little milk for their babes during the month, and that of a poor quality. Consequently the attendant nurses have to feed them from the hour of their birth with honey, rice-water, and the pulp of soft bananas. This is their almost entire living for the first two or three days, and a large portion of it during the first month."

Of the 5 women we interviewed who did not lie by the fire, 3 used a hot ashes chamber regularly throughout the postpartum rest period, one used it occasionally, and one used both the hot ashes chamber and a hot water bottle. This latter woman

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1. A small metal box in which sticks of fuel were burned. The box was wrapped in cloth and placed on the mother's abdomen.